



IT'S SO EASY BEING GREENE

Little Shop Of Horrors makes Ellen a superstar!



IT'S delicious, lip-smacking horror and the stars of the movie — despite the presence of Steve Martin, John Candy, Jim Belushi and Bill Murray — are without a doubt a blonde with a lispy voice and a green ever-growing plant that talks and sings.

And it's no accident that both are named Audrey in *Little Shop Of Horrors* — Audrey, alias actress Ellen Greene, and Audrey II, the blood-sucking plant that goes from cute to monster in the space of 90 fun-filled minutes.

For New Yorker Ellen, the movie was "wonderful" and a chance to

re-create on film the Off-Broadway stage role that made her famous.

Australia's Mike Walsh, with his producer's hat on, had no doubt *Little Shop Of Horrors*, the musical version of the 1961 B-Grade movie that starred a madly smiling 23-year-old Jack Nicholson, would be a hit on stage in Australia too. But instead of coming to Oz live, the show has arrived as what critics are calling "the hot new movie that gives a monstrous good time".

The storyline of *Little Shop* has it all — doowop, flytraps from outer space, maniacal dentists, skid row supremes, a love story to tear your

heart and a plant that could give you nightmares.

As America's USA Today critic Jack Curry announced: "With its pods, clods and Fifties-inspired sing-along score, the movie is the surest candidate for cult hit status since (Australia's) *Rocky Horror Picture Show*."

Ellen Greene is delighted.

"I had done the stage show, but they took a chance on me for the film. I don't have box-office credits. Good reviews on stage aren't enough, but they took a chance and I am thrilled," she says.



ABOVE: Ellen, Vince Gardenia, Rick Moranis and Audrey II, the man-eating plant, star in the M-rated monster comedy.

MAIN PICTURE OPPOSITE: Ellen, at the movie's start with her sadistic dentist boyfriend (Steve Martin).

INSET: Meet blood-sucking, slurping plant Audrey II!

Ellen plays Audrey, the flower fatale with the "little girl" voice who unwittingly inspires the horrendous happenings at Mushnik's flower shop and falls in love with the hapless Seymour — played by Rick Moranis, last seen as the accountant in *Ghostbusters*.

And for Ellen, who begins the movie as the beaten-up girlfriend of a sadistic dentist (played by a leather-clad, scowling, dark-haired Steve Martin) while dreaming of love and Tupperware parties and a suburban home with plastic flowers in window boxes and a mowed lawn, re-creating the role for the movie screen was "fun" and "different".

"Film is different — on stage you play everything up. On film you have to bring it down. I had to be sure I wasn't too theatrical," Ellen says.

The story of the movie is girl meets boy meets blood-sucking plant with Audrey and Audrey II the pivots.

As the sweet little plant that makes gentle slurping noises when Seymour cuts his finger and lets him know that blood is what it wants until the time it takes over the shop, eating all and sundry, Ellen's Audrey copes brilliantly. Even when the plant, with technical wizardry masterminded by director Frank Oz of *The Muppets* fame, becomes so realistic it is quite difficult to separate fact and fantasy.

"I've lived with Audrey II literally for years," says Ellen, smiling. She explains that the plant of the stage run was made by her friend — and now her live-in love — Marty Robertson, a puppeteer.

"In New York, our apartment is full of Marty's creations and during my run with the stage show, my job was to look after Audrey II and take her home with me each night. I'd clean her and look after her and I remember one night I accidentally froze her — I had left her on a windowsill and in the New York winter she froze and I panicked, using a hairdryer desperately try-

ing to get her defrosted in time for the night's performance."

For Ellen, one of the attractions of working on the \$35 million movie was working with "idols of mine" such as Steve Martin, Bill Murray and Jim Belushi.

"Bill Murray is so funny. He can say anything and make me giggle," she says of the actor who won international acclaim in *Ghostbusters*.

"And Steve Martin is extraordinary. People like him and the others leave their egos at the door. They are lovely men. Steve was so gracious and warm, but insane. You just laugh and laugh."

"He's conscientious, educated, often serious, an art expert and a great and generous actor."

Hellen also adored working with former *Muppets* maestro Frank Oz.

Little Shop Of Horrors has shot Ellen Greene, the daughter of a New York dentist, to overnight superstardom.

"I have had work offers and movie offers but I am saying no to them all for the moment. I believe so much in Little Shop I want to take time off to promote it."

From Jenny Cullen in Los Angeles